



Perceptions of the concerned reader: An analysis of the subscribers of *E/The Environmental Magazine*

Labbe, C. P., & Fortner, R. W. (2001). Perceptions of the concerned reader: An analysis of *E/The Environmental Magazine*. *The Journal of Environmental Education*, 32(3): 41-46.

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Program Profile	
Program Description:	<i>E/The Environmental Magazine</i> is a bimonthly specialized consumer magazine that focuses on providing readers with information, news, and resources on various environmental issues.
Program Goals:	The goal of <i>E/The Environmental Magazine</i> is to inform and inspire individuals who have concerns about the environment and want to know what they can do to help bring about improvements. In addition, <i>E</i> hopes to advance ecological perspectives, increase attention paid to environmental issues, and enlist greater popular support for environmental protection efforts.
Program Funding:	<i>E/The Environmental Magazine</i> is funded by subscriptions.
Program Links:	http://www.emagazine.com/index.php
Evaluation Profile	
Evaluation Goals & Questions:	<p>The goal of this evaluation was to determine whether <i>E/The Environmental Magazine</i> fulfilled readers' needs for environmental information and to what extent the magazine inspired readers to adopt environmentally responsible behavior (ERB).</p> <p>The goal led to the development of the following evaluation questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To what extent do subscribers perceive <i>E/The Environmental Magazine</i> to be effective in fulfilling its mission of promoting ERB? 2. What are the subscribers' opinions about <i>E</i>'s 1997 content? 3. Compared to other media sources, does <i>E</i> fulfill subscribers' needs for environmental information?
Evaluation Methods:	<p>A three-part survey instrument was developed. The first section asked subscribers to indicate how often they engaged in 25 ERBs. Behaviors were classified as persuasion, consumer action, political action, legal action, ecomanagement, or education action. The second section asked subscribers how much they agreed with various positive and negative statements regarding <i>E</i> content. In the last section of the survey, subscribers were asked to compare <i>E</i> and other media sources in terms of their importance for providing reliable environmental information.</p> <p><i>E</i> subscribers were then selected at random and sent a survey, cover letter, self-addressed stamped return envelope, and a small incentive (a bumper sticker).</p>

Instruments:	Questions used to collect evaluation data are described in the article.
How were results used?	The authors recommended market specialization studies and more refined segmentation of E's audience to determine how to expand readership beyond the niche that is being filled successfully.
Evaluation Cost:	Funding for the evaluation was obtained from the organization, with approximately \$400 for mailing, copying, etc. This amount did not include costs related to evaluator and program staff time or the purchase of incentive bumper stickers from the organization.
Evaluation Insights:	<p>What worked well? The response rate of 41% was good considering there was no opportunity to follow up with nonresponders. Readers in the sample seemed eager to cooperate, and the magazine was grateful for this confirmation of their impact among their target audience.</p> <p>What were the important evaluation "lessons learned"? Stakeholder control of research funding and sample contact limits the quality of evaluation. The academic expectations of research were somewhat compromised by constraints imposed by the magazine.</p> <p>What could have been done differently? The scope of the evaluation could have been broadened to include the opinions of unsubscribed readers. In addition, including a specific question about "what would make the publication better" could have improved the survey.</p>
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